

CHAPTER 6

Al-An‘âm: The Cattle

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 20 *sections*; 165 *verses*)

The name of this chapter is taken from the mention of *cattle* in connection with certain superstitions and idolatrous practices of the Arabs, the abolition of which was needed to establish the doctrine of Divine Unity in all its purity. The object of Islâm was not simply to preach Unity, but to make it the basis of a Muslim’s practical life, and so to uproot all idolatrous practices.

The last chapter deals towards its close with the Christian doctrine of the deification of Jesus, and hence this chapter is introduced to deal at length with the doctrine of Divine Unity and its ultimate triumph, not only over idolatry, but also over all kinds of polytheism. The Prophet had preached this noble doctrine for twelve whole years, without apparently causing any great change in the national idol-worship of the people. To an outward observer, therefore, the cause of the Prophet seemed an utter failure. Yet, so marvellous was his faith in the ultimate triumphing of Divine Unity that no obstacle, any apparent failure had shaken it in the least. And the words with which this chapter opens were uttered with unshakable confidence in the ultimate triumph of his cause, as if he had never received the least check in his onward course, and as though the goal was not only within sight, but close at hand.

Opening the chapter with a forcible declaration of the ultimate triumph of Divine Unity and referring to the greatness of His mercy in the second section - the doctrine of Unity being always combined with the doctrine of the unique mercy of the Diving Being. It refers in the third to the polytheists’ own evidence against their polytheism. The rejection of this great truth and its consequences are then stated in the fourth and fifth sections, mentioning incidentally the reward of believers in the sixth section. In the two succeeding sections the Divine judgment is declared to be imminent. The ninth, while calling attention to the necessity of submission to the Divine Being – the pith of Ibrâhîm’s Dîn (way of life as prescribed by Allâh) – mentions the arguments by which Ibrâhîm, that great Patriarch, who may be said to be the father of monotheism, convinced

his countrymen of the futility of the worship of any object other than Allâh. The tenth section mentions the names of seventeen other prophets who preached the Unity of the Divine Being, and the Holy Prophet is enjoined to follow in their footsteps. The eleventh section draws attention to the truth of the Divine revelation of the Qur'ân, which was now the bearer of that noble message of Divine Unity to mankind, and the next speaks of the ultimate triumph of that message. The thirteenth section states that this triumph would be brought about by a gradual progress, and the fourteenth refers to the polytheists' opposition. The plans adopted by the chief opponents are then hinted at in the fifteenth, and their failure prophesied in the sixteenth section, which deals with some of the evils of idolatry. The next two refer to the polytheists' self-imposed superstitious restrictions against the use of the flesh of certain animals, and the prohibited foods. The guiding rules of life are then briefly stated in the nineteenth section, while the chapter is closed by drawing attention to the great goal before the faithful; because, undoubtedly, the doctrine of Unity raised the ideal of human life to a very high standard.

The whole of this chapter was revealed in one portion (‘*Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) and the *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). It is generally considered to belong to the last year of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah.

SECTION 1: Ultimate Triumph of Divine Unity

I seek the assistance of Allâh the Beneficent Creator the Merciful bounty giver.

1 Praise be to Allâh, Who created the *samâwât* and the earth, and made darkness and light. Yet those who disbelieve set up equals to their *Rabb*.¹

2 He it is Who created you from clay, then He decreed a term. And there is a term named with Him; still you doubt.²

1 : The words that Allâh is the Maker of darkness and light are directed against the dualistic doctrine of the Magian religion, which holds light and darkness to be two co-eternal principles. The religion of Islâm is the purest monotheism, and thus it holds that the ultimate cause of all things is the Great Maker of the *samâwât* and the earth. Pure monotheism holds out before man the bright hope that, as goodness is inherent in the Divine Being, it is also the goal to which the creation moves on; while dualism considers the prevalence of evil to be necessary.

3 And He is Allâh in the *samâwât* and in the earth. He knows your secret (thoughts) and your open (words), and He knows what you earn.³

4 And there comes not to them any message of the messages of their *Rabb* but they turn away from it.

5 So they rejected the truth when it came to them, but soon will come to them the news of that which they mocked.

6 See they not how many a generation We destroyed before them, whom We had established in the earth as We have not established you, and We sent the clouds pouring abundant rain on them, and We made the rivers flow beneath them? Then We destroyed them for their sins, and raised up after them another generation.

7 And if We had sent down to thee a writing on paper, then they had touched it with their hands, those who disbelieve would have said: This is nothing but clear enchantment.⁴

8 And they say: Why has not an *malak* been sent down to him? And if We send down an *malak*, the matter would be decided and then they would not be respited.⁵

9 And if We had made him an *malak*, We would certainly have made him a man, and (thus) made confused to them what they confuse.⁶

2 : The first term is that of life and the second the Resurrection. All human beings are created from clay, which means, in the case of Adam as well as men generally, that the earth is the original source, and dust the first stage, of life.

3 : Life in Resurrection spoken of in the previous verse is here stated to be the result of human being's own actions, which, whether done secretly or openly, are known to Allâh. It is out of *what you earn* that He shapes a new life for you.

4 : Compare 4:153: "The People of the Book ask thee to bring down to them a Book from samâ'". So far removed are people from religious realities that they want to see them in a physical form. If truth had been sent down to human beings in the physical form of a book, and had not been revealed to the mind of humans, it could not bring about a transformation in the minds of human beings. But even if it had taken a physical shape, they would have called it an enchantment, and still rejected it.

5 : The Divine message was undoubtedly brought by a *malak*, but here again they wanted to see the reality of a *malak* in a physical form. The presence of *malâ'ikah* was felt by the righteous in the transformation which they worked in their hearts. But the hearts of the wicked were impervious to all good, and hence the only form in which the *malâ'ikah* could make their presence felt to them was by punishing them for their evil deeds. Hence the coming of the *malâ'ikah* to the guilty is always spoken of in the Qur'ân as being synonymous with the infliction of the punishment with which they were threatened. Compare 2:210, and v. 158.

6 : The meaning is that if a *malak* were made a messenger to mankind, he would doubtless appear in the form of man inasmuch as the physical eye cannot see *malâ'ikah*. Moreover only a human being could serve as a model for human beings. Thus in case a *malak* appeared in the shape of a man, there would still be the same confusion in their minds as when a human being was entrusted with the Divine message.

10 And certainly messengers before you were derided, but that which they derided encompassed those of them who scoffed.⁷

SECTION 2: Greatness of Divine Mercy

11 Say: Travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejectors.

12 Say: To whom belongs whatever is in the *samâwât* and the earth? Say, “To Allâh. He has ordained mercy on Himself.⁸ He will certainly gather you on the Resurrection day – there is no doubt about it. Those who have lost their *nafs* [selves] will not believe.

13 And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and the day. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

14 Say: Shall I take for a friend other than Allâh, the Originator of the *samâwât* and the earth, and He feeds and is not fed? Say, “I am commanded to be the first of those who submit. And be you not of the polytheists.

15 Say: Surely I fear, if I disobey my *Rabb*, the chastisement of a grievous day.

16 He from whom it is averted on that day, Allâh indeed has had mercy on him. And this is a manifest achievement.

17 And if Allâh touch you with affliction, there is none to remove it but He. And if He touch you with good, He is Possessor of power over all things.⁹

18 And He is the Supreme, above His servants. And He is the Wise, the Aware.

19 Say: What thing is the weightiest in testimony? Say, “Allâh is witness between you and me. And this Qur’ân has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches.¹⁰ Do you really bear witness that there are other gods with Allâh? Say, “I bear not witness. Say, “He is only One Deity, and surely I am innocent of that which you set up (with Him).

7 : They ridiculed the idea of the Prophet and the believers being triumphant. Truth had always triumphed, they are told, and it would triumph even now.

8 : The words *He has ordained mercy on Himself* imply that mercy is in fact His very nature. The evidence of Divine mercy is manifest in the physical world: He has created all things for the benefit of human beings. Would He not deal equally mercifully with human beings in their religious needs and send a revelation to guide them?

9 : I.e. Allâh, being All-powerful, will bring good to you.

10 : The Holy Prophet was thus a warner, not for the Arabs only, but for all people whom the Qur’ân may reach, i.e. for the whole world.

20 Those whom We have given the Book recognise him as they recognise their sons.¹¹ Those who have lost their *nafs* [their inner self] – they will not believe.

SECTION 3: **Polytheists' Witness against Themselves**

21 And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allâh or gives the lie to His messages? Surely the wrongdoers will not be successful.

22 And on the day We gather them all together, then We shall say to those who set up gods (with Allâh): Where are your associate-deities whom you asserted?

23 Then their excuse¹² would be nothing but that they would say: By Allâh, our *Rabb*! we were not polytheists.

24 See how they lie against their own *nafs* [selves], and that which they forged shall fail them!

25 And of them is he who hearkens to thee and We have cast veils over their hearts so that they understand it not and a deafness into their ears. And (even) if they see every sign they will not believe in it.¹³ So much so that when they come to thee they only dispute with you — those who disbelieve say, “This is naught but stories of the ancients.

26 And they forbid (others) from it, and they keep away from it; and they ruin none but their own *nafs* [selves] while they perceive not.

27 And if you could see when they are made to stand before the Fire, and say: Would that we were sent back! We would not reject the messages of our *Rabb* but would be of the believers.

28 Nay, that which they concealed before will become manifest to them. And if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden, and surely they are liars.¹⁴

11 : For *as they recognize their sons*, see the footnote of 2:146.

12 : *Fitnah*, according to IJ, means here either, *answer* or *excuse*, the answer or the excuse being so called because of its being *a lie*.

13 : Veils were cast over their hearts because they would not believe even if they saw all the signs. As the words that follow show, they came to the Prophet, not for the purpose of listening to and pondering over what he said but to dispute with him. The veils were due to their own actions; see the footnote of 2:10.

14 : The evil consequences of their deeds were hidden in this life, but they will become manifest in the life after death. And since, if they were sent back, the evil consequences of evil deeds would again be hidden from the physical eye they would revert to evil deeds.

29 And they say: There is nothing but our life of this world and we shall not be raised again.

30 And if thou couldst see when they are made to stand before their *Rabb!* He will say, “Is not this the truth? They will say, “Yea, by our *Rabb!* He will say, “Taste then the chastisement because you disbelieved.

SECTION 4: **Rejection of the Truth**

31 They are losers indeed who reject the meeting with Allâh, until when the hour¹⁵ comes upon them suddenly, they will say: O our grief for our neglecting it! And they bear their burdens on their backs. Now surely evil is that which they bear!

32 And this world’s life is naught but a play and an idle sport. And certainly the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who keep their duty. Do you not then understand?

33 We know indeed that what they say grieves thee, for surely they give not thee the lie, but the wrongdoers give the lie to Allâh’s messages.¹⁶

34 And messengers indeed were rejected before you, but they were patient when rejected and persecuted, until Our help came to them. And there is none to change the words of Allâh.¹⁷ And there has already come to thee some information about the messengers.

35 And if their turning away is hard on thee, then, if thou canst, seek an opening into the earth or a ladder to *samâ’*, to bring them a sign!¹⁸ And if Allâh pleased, He would certainly have gathered them all to guidance, so be not of the ignorant.

15 : By the *hour* is meant their *doom*, as well as the hour of *final judgment*.

16 : The Prophet was known among them as *al-Amîn*, i.e., *the Faithful* or *the Truthful one*. His worst enemies at the height of their enmity admitted that he had never told a lie (Bukhârî 1:1). It was after he received the Divine revelation that he was called a liar, and hence it was really a denial of the Divine revelation, not a denial as to the Prophet’s truthfulness.

17 : The context shows clearly that by *the words of Allâh* here are meant *the prophecies* foretelling the triumph of Truth and the overthrow of all opposition. As help came to messengers before the Holy Prophet so would help come to him, and this was a prophecy, which none could change and whose fulfilment was sure.

18 : By *sign* is meant a sign that should bring all to guidance, as shown by what follows. Their doom was pronounced, and that word must be fulfilled, as affirmed in the previous verse; but the demand of the people to be overawed into an immediate submission to the Prophet by a sign was not in accordance with the Divine Law.

36 Only those accept who listen. And (as for) the dead, Allâh will raise them - then to Him they will be returned.¹⁹

37 And they say: Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his *Rabb*? Say, “Surely Allâh is Able to send down a sign, but most of them know not.”²⁰

38 And there is no animal in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but (they are) communities like yourselves. We have not neglected anything in the Book. Then to their *Rabb* will they be gathered.²¹

39 And those who reject Our messages are deaf and dumb, in darkness. Whom Allâh pleases He leaves in error. And whom He pleases He places on the right way.

40 Say: See, if the chastisement of Allâh overtake you or the hour come upon you, will you call on others than Allâh, if you are truthful?

41 Nay, Him you call upon, so He removes that for which you pray, if He pleases, and you forget what you set up (with Him).²²

SECTION 5: Consequences of Rejection

42 And indeed We sent (messengers) to nations before thee then We seized them with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves.

43 Yet why did they not, when Our punishment came to them, humble themselves? But their hearts hardened and the *shaitân* made all that they did seem fair to them.

19 : Those addressed by the Prophet are here divided into two classes: (1) those who listen: they accept the Prophet and become believers; (2) those who are religiously dead and pay no heed to the Prophet’s warning. Even the latter are not to be despaired of, for Allâh will raise them too to religious life. Their being returned to Allâh stands here for their submission to Allâh and ultimate acceptance of the Truth.

20 : The sign spoken of here is the sign asked for in v. 35. Allâh did send the very sign demanded, as we find the Arabs submitting to the Holy Prophet almost in a body after the conquest of Makkah.

21 : Other creatures are all provided for by Allâh as men are, so far as physical needs are concerned, and therefore man must obey the laws of nature as other animals do. But human being’s nature aspires to something higher, and it is to satisfy that religious craving that prophets are sent. This verse, moreover, points, as it were, to two classes of men — those who, like beasts, are wholly bent on earth and cannot rise, and those who rise like birds, soaring upward to the higher spiritual regions. The concluding words of the verse — *then to their Rabb will they be gathered* — are in reference to mankind and, as compared with other animals, point to the Higher life, the life eternal in Allâh. There is no mention here or anywhere else in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân of the lower animals being raised to a new life for Judgment.

22 : In dire distress and affliction even the polytheist finds nobody to call upon but Allâh. This shows that a belief in the Divine existence and Unity of Allâh is inherent in human nature.

44 Then, when they neglected that with which they had been admonished, We opened for them the gates of all things. Until, when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them suddenly; then lo! They were in utter despair.²³

45 So the roots of the people who did wrong were cut off. And praise be to Allâh, the *Rabb* of the worlds.²⁴

46 Say, "Have you considered that if Allâh should take away your hearing and your sight and seal your hearts, who is the deity besides Allâh that can bring it to you? See how We repeat the messages yet they turn away!

47 Say: See, if the chastisement of Allâh should overtake you suddenly or openly, will any be destroyed but the wrongdoing people?

48 And We send not messengers but as bearers of good news and warners; then whoever believes and acts aright, they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

49 And as for those who reject Our messages, chastisement will afflict them because they transgressed.

50 Say, "I say not to you, I have with me the treasures of Allâh, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am a *malak*; I follow only that which is revealed to me. Say, "Are the blind and the seeing alike? Do you not then reflect?"²⁵

SECTION 6: Reward of Believers

23 : By *opening the gates of all things* is meant that all comforts of life were made accessible to them.

24 : By cutting off the *roots* is meant the destruction of the ringleaders in particular.

25 : Never did a prophet talk in plainer language and with a greater modesty to his people. Appearing among a superstitious and ignorant people, he could have claimed any supernatural powers for himself, and the people would willingly have accepted him. But he told them plainly that he was but a man; he had no treasures, nor did he lay claim for himself as a man to know the secrets of the future, nor did he profess to be any more than a mortal. What distinguished him from the rest of mankind was that Allâh revealed His will to him, and he faithfully followed and translated into practice everything that he received from on High. And as he himself was, so he wanted others to be. It was not his object to make his followers possessors of treasures, or wonder-workers, or fortune-tellers, but *men* first and last — men true to themselves and true followers of the high principles of life which had been revealed to him. He plainly told the people what was wanted of them, and it is for his plain speaking that he is frequently called in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân a *plain warner*.

"Here he declares himself unacquainted with the secrets of Allâh" is the remark, which the noble words of the above verse draw from a Christian annotator, and the grotesque conclusion is immediately drawn that "he confesses he does not possess the gift of prophecy". What is meant by the verse is that, as a man, Muḥammad was like other men, i.e., he did not know the unseen, etc., but, as a prophet, he knew and followed everything revealed to him by Allâh. The unique greatness and nobleness of the Prophet lie in the fact that he never tried to put himself before people as superhuman.

51 And warn with it those who fear that they will be gathered to their *Rabb* – there is no protector for them, nor any intercessor besides Him – so that they may keep their duty.

52 And drive not away those who call upon their *Rabb*, morning and evening, desiring only His pleasure. Neither art thou accountable for them in ought, nor are they accountable for you in ought, that you should drive them away and thus be of the wrongdoers.²⁶

53 And thus do We try some of them by others so that they say: Are these they upon whom Allâh has conferred benefit from among us?²⁷ Does not Allâh best know the grateful?

54 And when those who believe in Our messages come to thee, say: Peace be to you, your *Rabb* has ordained mercy on Himself, (so) that if anyone of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful.

55 And thus do We make distinct the messages and so that the way of the guilty may become clear.

SECTION 7: Divine Judgment

56 Say: I am forbidden to serve those whom you call upon besides Allâh. Say: I follow not your low desires, for then indeed I should go astray and should not be of the guided ones.

57 Say: Surely I have manifest proof from my *Rabb* and you call it a lie. I have not with me that which you would hasten. The judgment is only Allâh's. He relates the truth and He is the Best of deciders.

26 : The commentators agree that this verse was revealed when some leading Quraish expressed their willingness to accept the Prophet if the poorer Muslims were not allowed to remain in his company at the time. The poor and the rich are here brought to the same level; they are all men, they have equal claims to learn and practise the truth. Nay, those who accepted the truth had a prior claim on the Prophet's attention. Truth is equally accessible to all, to the religion of Islâm, no aristocracy is known. Before the Great Master the differences of rank, wealth and colour sink into insignificance, and therefore before Allâh's Messenger, as before Allâh Himself, they must all stand upon one level. *Everyone is answerable for what he does* is the golden principle preached by Islâm.

27 : The simple and decisive answer given above no doubt wounded the pride of the wealthy Quraish, who were required to sit along with the poor slaves whom they never treated as human beings, and thus they were tried.

58 Say: If that which you would hasten were with me, the matter would have certainly been decided between you and me. And Allâh best knows the wrongdoers.

59 And with Him are the treasures²⁸ of the unseen – none knows them but He. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. And there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything green or dry, but (it is all) in a clear book.²⁹

60 And He it is Who takes your life [*yatawaffâkum*] at night, and He knows what you earn by day, then He raises you up therein that an appointed term may be fulfilled. Then to Him is your return, then He will inform you of what you did.

SECTION 8: Divine Judgment

61 And He is the Supreme above His servants, and He sends keepers over you; until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers cause him to die, and they are not remiss.³⁰

62 Then are they sent back to Allâh, their Master, the True one. Now surely His is the judgment and He is Swiftest in taking account.

63 Say: Who is it that delivers you from the calamities³¹ of the land and the sea? (when) you call upon Him, in humility and in secret: If He deliver us from this, we will certainly be of the grateful ones.

64 Say: Allâh delivers you from this and from every distress, yet you set up others (with Him).

28 : The word *mafâtih* is plural of *mißtâh* as well as of *maßtâh*, the former meaning *key* and the latter *repository* or *a treasure* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Hence both significances are admissible.

29 : The clear book is the great law of cause and effect. The falling of the leaf indicates that its power to draw nourishment has come to an end; thus do individuals and nations fall. The grain in the darkness of the earth stands for the mission of the Prophet, for that grain was destined to sprout forth, growing into a tree of exceptional proportions. The “green” indicates those people that prosper and the “dry” those that must fall off.

30 : The allusion seems to be to the ultimate sweeping away of all opposition. The next verse makes it clear. The *hafazah* are the guardian *malâ'ikah*, for which see footnote of 13:11.

31 : *Zulumât* (plural of *zulmat*, lit., *darkness*) means the *troubles, afflictions, calamities* or *hardships* (of the sea). It could also mean: *a day of much evil* or *a day in which one finds hardship* or *difficulty* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

65 Say: He has the power to send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet, or to throw you into confusion, (making you) of different parties, and make some of you taste the violence of others. See how We repeat the messages that they may understand!^a

66 And thy people call it a lie and it is the Truth. Say: I am not put in charge of you.^a

67 For every prophecy is a term, and you will soon come to know (it).^a

68 And when you see those who talk nonsense about Our messages, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse. And if the shaitân cause you to forget, then sit not after recollection with the unjust people.

65a. The three forms of punishment were witnessed by the Prophet's opponents later on. A punishment from above took the form of a storm, witnessed in the well-known battle of the Allies, when an army between ten and twenty thousand strong, which could easily have destroyed the small body of entrenched Muslims, took to flight merely on account of a great storm; a punishment from beneath took the form of a drought which brought great affliction upon the people of Makkah for seven years; while they were made to taste the violence at the hands of the Muslims in the battles which they themselves started and which brought about the final disruption of the power of the Quraish. By the two first, some understand a punishment at the hands of the leaders and a punishment at the hands of the servants (*'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs* (Companion) and the *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî); in other words, the tyranny of the bourgeois and the tyranny of the proletariat. It should be noted that these three forms of punishment are meant as well for the later opponents of the Prophet. The material civilization of the West has in fact produced the very evils which are spoken of in this verse as being the punishment of those who pay no heed to the spiritual or higher values of life. The capitalists at first had the upper hand and they tyrannized labour; and socialism, or bolshevism, is now wreaking vengeance on the capitalist countries. To these two punishments is now added a third. The whole world is now divided into parties which aim at each other's destruction and the violence of man against man has reached a peak un-thought of by the world.

Whole cities with their millions of residents are turned into graves in the twinkling of an eye, and this wholesale destruction of man by man is considered as the greatest feat of material civilization. Perhaps man was never so savage as he is today.

66a. The concluding phrase may also be translated as I am not a disposer of your affairs. The significance in both cases is the same.

67a. The meaning adopted here is the one given by *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane in explaining the meaning of *mustaqarr*, which means the place or time beyond which a thing does not pass, hence its term. *Naba'* means information and hence prophecy, which gives information concerning the future. According to R it means an announcement of great utility.

The prophecy of the vanquishment of the powerful opponents of Islâm is declared with even greater emphasis than in the earlier stage of the Prophet's mission, notwithstanding the apparent triumph of opposition to his cause which had succeeded in scattering the few men who accepted Islâm.

69 And those who keep their duty are not accountable for them in aught but (theirs) is only to remind; haply they may guard against evil.

70 And leave those who take their religion for a play and an idle sport, and whom this world's life has deceived, and remind (men) hereby lest a *nafs* be destroyed for what it has earned. It has besides Allâh no friend nor intercessor, and though it offer every compensation, it will not be accepted from it. Those are they who are destroyed for what they earn. For them is a drink of boiling water and a painful chastisement, because they disbelieved.

SECTION 9: Ibrâhîm's Argument for Divine Unity

71 Say: Shall we call, besides Allâh, on that which profits us not nor harms us, and shall we be turned back on our heels after Allâh has guided us? Like one whom the shayâtîn cause to follow his low desires, in bewilderment in the earth^a — he has companions who call him to the right way (saying), Come to us. Say: Surely

the guidance of Allâh that is the (true) guidance. And we are commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds:

71a. *Istahwat-hu* from the root *hawâ* (desire, or low desire) is explained by the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî R as meaning *hamalat-hu 'alâ ittibâ'-il-hawâ*, i.e., he caused him to follow his low desire. Others explain the word as meaning he made him fall down (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). The man who follows only his low desires finds himself ultimately in bewilderment, and he is unable to find the way, though his companions call him to the right way. Submission to Allâh, on the other hand, makes a man have a set purpose of life before him, and makes him apply his whole energy to the attainment of that purpose and thus makes him attain success in life. Ibrâhîm is therefore spoken of in the verses that follow as an example of a man who submitted himself completely to Allâh.

72 And that you should keep up prayer and keep your duty to Him. And He it is to Whom you shall be gathered.

73 And He it is Who created the *samâwât* and the earth with truth. And when He says, Be, it is.^a His word is the truth and His is the kingdom on the day when the trumpet is blown.^b The Knower of the unseen and the seen; and He is the Wise, the Aware.

73a. These words are generally used when the bringing about of a great change — a change which seems to be impossible to men — is meant.

73b. *Sûr* carries two significances. It means the trumpet, and the trumpet is generally blown to gather men together. Thus it indicates the taking place of a great revolution. The reference may be either to the Resurrection when men will be raised to be brought to judgment, or the great devotional resurrection which was to be brought about through the Prophet when the whole of Arabia was destined to receive a new life, the life religious, or perhaps to the still greater religious resurrection when the whole of humanity was destined to receive a new

life through the triumph of Islâm. The Kingdom of Allâh, we are told, will be established on earth on that day. But *Sûr* is said by some to be the plural of *sûrat*, meaning a form (*Al-Sihâh Tâj al-Lughah wa Sihâh al-'Arabiyyah* (Dictionary) by Ismâ'il ibn Hammâd al-Jawharî and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The meaning is either that forms will become realities by being breathed into, or, as *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane has it on the authority of *Al-Sihâh Tâj al-Lughah wa Sihâh al-'Arabiyyah* (Dictionary) by Ismâ'il ibn Hammâd al-Jawharî and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane the and *Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ, when the *nafs* shall be blown into the forms of the dead. The reference in this case too may be either to the Resurrection day or to the devotional resurrection which was to be brought about by the Prophet.

74 And when Ibrâhîm said to his sire, Âzar:^a Take you idols for deities? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error.

74a. Whether Âzar was the father of Ibrâhîm, or his grandfather or uncle, is a much disputed point. The word *ab* means a father as well as an ancestor (*Al-Muḥkam wa-l-Muḥîṭ al-A'zam* (Dictionary), by 'Alî ibn Ismâ'il ibn Sîdah, and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and in 2:133 it is applied to an uncle because there Ismâ'il is spoken of as an *ab* of Jacob. The difficulty arises from two points. In the first place *Zajjâj* (Grammarians) says that the *nassâbs* agree that Ibrâhîm's father's name was *Târah*, which is the same as *Terah*, the name given to Ibrâhîm's father in Genesis, and *Zurqânî* also gives *Târah* as Ibrâhîm's father's name. But it may be noted that Eusebius speaks of *Târah* as *Âthar*, which is about the same as *Âzar*. The second difficulty is that Ibrâhîm's father (Arabic *wâlid*) is spoken of in 14:41 as a believer, while the sire (Arabic *ab*) is elsewhere spoken of as having stuck to idolatry till his death (9:114). Hence I prefer sire as the significance of the word. Some commentators consider *Âzar* as being the name of an idol, while still others think that it is not a proper name at all and mean *mukhîṭ*, i.e., erring (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî).

75 And thus did We show Ibrâhîm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those having certainty.^a

76 So when the night overshadowed him, he saw a star. He said: Is this my *Rabb*?^a So when it set, he said: I love not the setting ones.

77 Then when he saw the moon rising, he said: Is this my *Rabb*? So when it set, he said: If my *Rabb* had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people.

78 Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: Is this my *Rabb*? Is this the greatest? So when it set, he said: O my people, I am clear of what you set up (with Allâh).

79 Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.

75a. Showing Ibrâhîm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth signifies granting him an insight into the Divine laws of nature working in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. This insight had convinced him that Allâh was the real controller of the universe and Supreme above all, while the sun, the moon, the stars and other heavenly bodies, which the Sabians worshipped, were only His creation and subject to His laws.

76a. The words *hâdhâ rabbî*, literally this is my *Rabb*, do not contain Ibrâhîm's conviction. As shown in the previous verse, he was a believer in Divine Unity. The words are either uttered by way of surprise, as referring to his people's belief, who are then made to realize their error by showing that what they call a god disappears at times, and therefore does not deserve to be worshipped — these people were not only idolaters, but also worshippers of the heavenly bodies. Or, the phrase may be interrogatory, alif, the letter of interrogation, being omitted, and interrogation expresses disapproval (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). I prefer the second interpretation.

It should be borne in mind that Ibrâhîm never worshipped idols or the heavenly bodies like his people. He has already been spoken of in verse 74 as denouncing the idol-worship of his people, and in verse 75 as possessing certainty of faith in One Allâh. Reading further on, we find it clearly stated in verse 83 that what is related here was an argument by which Ibrâhîm tried to convince his people that

they worshipped false deities: “And this was Our argument which We gave to Ibrâhîm against his people”. Ibrâhîm’s own certainty and strong conviction in Allâh is placed beyond all doubt by verses 74, 75; and in the verses that follow he is shown as giving arguments to convince his people that they were wrong in worshipping the heavenly bodies, which were themselves subject to Divine laws.

80 And his people disputed with him. He said: Do you dispute with me respecting Allâh and He has guided me indeed? And I fear not in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my *Rabb* please. My *Rabb* comprehends all things in His knowledge. Will you not then mind?

81 And how should I fear what you have set up (with Him), while you fear not to set up with Allâh that for which He has sent down to you no authority? Which then of the two parties is surer of security, if you know?

82 Those who believe and mix not up their faith with iniquity — for them is security and they go aright.

SECTION 10: Prophets among Ibrâhîm’s Descendants

83 And this was Our argument which We gave to **Ibrâhîm** against his people. We exalt in degrees whom We please. Surely thy *Rabb* is Wise, Knowing.

84 And We gave him **Ishâq** and **Ya‘qûb**. Each did We guide; and **Nûh** did We guide before, and of his descendants,^a **Dâwûd** and **Sulaimân** and **Ayyûb** and **Yûsuf** and **Mûsâ** and **Hârûn**. And thus do We reward those who do good (to others):

85 And **Zakariyyâ** and **Yahyâ** and **‘Îsâ** and **Ilyâs**; each one (of them) was of the righteous,

84a. All the prophets named are the descendants of Ibrâhîm, who was a descendant of Nûh, and therefore “his descendants” might mean either Ibrâhîm’s or Nûh’s descendants. The only difficulty in the former case is with reference to Lût, who was a nephew and not an actual descendant of Ibrâhîm, but as in 2:133 an uncle is called a father, a nephew might be included among descendants.

Eighteen prophets are named here. They are not mentioned in chronological order. (See the next chapter, where the histories of several great prophets are mentioned in exact chronological order.) There are some peculiar aspects of life regarding which the prophets referred to here are mentioned in different groups, and this is the reason why the concluding words of each of the three verses speaking of the three groups are different.

86 And **Ismâ‘îl** and **Al-Yash‘a** and **Yûnus** and **Lûţ**; and each one (of them) We made to excel the people;

87 And some of their fathers and their descendants and their brethren.^a And We chose them and guided them to the right way.

88 This is Allâh’s guidance wherewith He guides whom He pleases of His servants. And if they had associated others (with Him), all that they did would have been vain.^a

89 These are they to whom We gave the Book and authority and prophecy.^a Therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have indeed entrusted it to a people who are not disbelievers in it.

87a. Not only the prophets named in the above verses were made to excel the people of their time, but some of their fathers and their brethren and their descendants were granted such excellence, though they were not prophets.

88a. Had they associated others with God, their deeds would have borne no fruit, and thus their mission would have been unsuccessful. This shows that no prophet was guilty of shirk at any time in his life.

89a. Each one of the prophets was given three things. The first was the *Kitâb*, the Book, or the Divine revelation which the prophet was granted, the messages he received from on high, to guide people aright. The second is called *ḥukm*, which means authority to judge. This shows that every prophet received authority directly from Allâh, and it was by Divine authority that he judged his people. The third is *nubuwwat*, which means prophethood or the gift of prophecy. The Book contains directions for guidance of the people and *nubuwwat* is the prophetic part which is meant to strengthen the faith. Thus the Holy Prophet Muḥammad

was granted the gift of prophecy long before he was granted the Book which began with the words, Read in the name of your *Rabb* (96:1). Further there is a vast number of his prophecies which are contained in the Hadîth and which do not form a part of the Book, the Qur'ân. A prophet without a book is as meaningless as a messenger without a message.

90 These are they whom Allâh guided, so follow their guidance. Say: I ask you not for any reward for it. It is naught but a Reminder to the nations.^a

SECTION 11: Truth of Divine Revelation

91 And they honour not Allâh with the honour due to Him, when they say: Allâh has not revealed anything to a mortal.^a Say: Who revealed the Book which Mûsâ brought, a light and a guidance to men — you make it into (scattered) papers,^b which you show and you conceal much? And you are taught that which neither you nor your fathers knew. Say: Allâh. Then leave them sporting in their idle talk.

90a. The Prophet is told to follow the guidance of all the earlier prophets, because his message was for all the nations to whom previous prophets had separately come. Hence the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân is called a Reminder in the concluding words, showing that it was meant for all the nations, to whom it was a reminder of what they had received before. The Prophet is, in fact, here told that he was now the representative of all the prophets that had gone before him, and therefore possessed all the excellences which were granted to those prophets separately.

91a. The word *qadr* has a variety of meanings. 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs (Companion) interprets the words as meaning they honour not Allâh with the honour due to Him; Abu-l-'Âliyah as they assign not to Allâh the attributes due to Him; and *Akhfash* as they know not Allâh as they ought to have known Him (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). The words Allâh has not revealed anything to a mortal may mean a total denial of Allâh revealing Himself to human beings or simply a denial of revelation to the Prophet, who is again and again referred to in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân as a *bashar* or a mortal.

The reply to their allegation takes first the case of the people who believed in a previous revelation like the Jews and the Christians. They are told that the same Allâh Who revealed a book to Mûsâ, containing a clear prophecy of a prophet like him, has now in fulfilment of that prophecy sent the like of Mûsâ who, both the Jews and the Christians believed, had not appeared till then. Their only answer to that clear prophecy was that they would not mention it or talk of it at all — and you conceal much. But even the deniers of Divine revelation in *toto*, as the idolaters of Arabia were, could not explain away the striking resemblance of the two. They are, however, further told that the proof of revelation was in the knowledge which it gave — you are taught that which neither you nor your fathers knew.

91b. *Qarâṭīs* is plural of *qirtâs*, which means a paper. What is implied is that it is written down on scattered papers, some parts being shown, while others are concealed. The book was not kept intact hence its description as scattered papers.

92 And this is a Blessed Book We have revealed, verifying that which is before it, and that you may warn the mother of the towns^a and those around her. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and they keep a watch over their prayers.

93 And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allâh, or says, Revelation has been granted to me; while nothing has been revealed to him; and he who says: I can reveal the like of that which Allâh has revealed?^a And if thou couldst see when the wrongdoers are in the agonies of death and the angels stretch forth their hands, (saying): Yield up your souls. This day you are awarded a chastisement of disgrace because you spoke against Allâh other than truth, and (because) you scorned His messages.

94 And certainly you have come to Us one by one as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs what We gave you. And We see not with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allâh's) associates in respect to you. Certainly the ties between you are now cut off and that which you asserted has failed you.^a

92a. *Umm al-Qurâ*, lit., the mother of the towns, is the title by which Makkah is known. The reason why Makkah is called *umm al-qurâ* is not only that it was both the political and the devotional centre of Arabia, but also because it was destined to be the universal devotional centre — the real mother of the whole world.

93a. There is nothing in the words of this verse to show that it refers to the false prophets, who set up claims towards the close of the Holy Prophet's career, and that it was therefore revealed late at Madînah. The verse expresses only in another form the truth expressed in this chapter in verses 21, 144, 157, and in 39:32. It is to declare the Prophet free of having forged a lie against Allâh; the words "or says, Revelation has been granted to me, while nothing has been revealed to him", only explain those that precede, viz., "Who forges a lie against Allâh"; while the words "I can reveal the like of that which Allâh has revealed", are the words of those who refuse to believe in the truth of Divine revelation, or "reject" the Divine revelation, as is elsewhere said.

SECTION 12: Ultimate Triumph of the Truth

95 Surely Allâh causes the grain and the date-stone to germinate. He brings forth the living from the dead and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living. That is Allâh. How are you then turned away!^a

96 He is the Cleaver of the daybreak; and He has made the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for reckoning. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Knowing.^a

97 And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you might follow the right way thereby in the darkness of the land and the sea. Indeed We have made plain the signs for a people who know.^a

98 And He it is Who has brought you into being from a single nafs, then there is (for you) a resting-place and a repository. Indeed We have made plain the signs for a people who understand.^a

94a. That is, those whom you asserted to be associates with Allâh will not be able to help you in any way.

95a. The preaching of the Prophet is likened to the sowing of the seed which, though to all appearance it is lost in the earth, soon springs forth into a large tree. The bringing forth the living from the dead is the bringing forth a living people from the religiously dead Arabs, and the bringing forth the dead from the living alludes to the religious death of those who had been previously granted religious life through Divine revelation.

96a. The darkness prevailing in the earth would soon be dispelled, and would give place to light, even as, with the break of the morning, darkness gives place to light.

97a. In religious literature the stars represent the lesser lights which guide the people. The Prophet is likened to the sun, and those who receive light from him and transmit it to others are likened to the stars. Thus in a saying of the Holy Prophet we have: “My companions are as stars; whomsoever of them you follow you follow the right course” (*Al-Misbâh al-Munîr fî Gharîb al-Sharh al-Kabîr* (Dictionary), by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alî al-Muqrî al-Fayûmî 27:12). The analogy is that He Who makes light to guide you physically could not have neglected your religious guidance.

99 And He it is Who sends down water from the clouds, then We bring forth with it buds of all (plants), then We bring forth from it green (foliage), from which We produce clustered grain; and of the date-palm, of the sheaths of it, come forth clusters (of dates) within reach; and gardens of grapes and the olive and the pomegranate, alike and unlike. Look at the fruit of it when it bears fruit and the ripening of it. Surely there are signs in this for a people who believe!

100 And they regard the *jinn* to be partners with Allâh, and He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Glory be to Him, and highly exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him)!^a

SECTION 13: Gradual Progress

101 Wonderful Originator of the *samâwât* and the earth! How could He have a son when He has no consort? And He created everything, and He is the Knower of all things.^a

98a. *Mustaqarr* (Arabic for resting-place, from *qarra*, he or it settled, remained in a place, rested — *istaqarra* means the same) and *mustauda‘* (Arabic. for repository, from *wadu‘a*, he or it became quiet — *istauda‘a*, he entrusted him with property for safe custody) are explained variously as meaning, respectively, the loins of the father and the womb of the mother, as standing for the male and the female (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî), or, the resting-place is this life and the repository is the grave, so that the meaning is that some live and others die; or the resting-place is the final abode of bliss and the repository the temporary residence in this world. Or it is an infinitive noun meaning there is abiding, and entrustment, the abiding being in this life, and the entrustment the return to the Divine Master (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî).

100a. The reference is either to the dualistic doctrine of the Magi, who thought that while Allâh was the creator of good, the devil was the creator of evil, or to the Arab belief that the jinn had a hand in the transaction of their affairs, or in bringing them good fortune or ill luck. Thus the Arabic word *jinn* stands here either for the *shaitân*.

102 That is Allâh, your *Rabb*. There is no deity but He; the Creator of all things; therefore serve Him, and He has charge of all things.

103 Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Subtile, the Aware.^a

104 Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your *Rabb*; so whoever sees, it is for his own good; and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm. And I am not a keeper over you.

105 And thus do We repeat the messages, and that they may say, You have studied; and that We may make it clear to a people who know.

106 Follow that which is revealed to you from your *Rabb* — there is no deity but He; and turn away from the polytheists.

107 And if Allâh had pleased, they would not have set up others (with Him). And We have not appointed you a keeper over them, and you are not placed in charge of them.

108 And abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allâh, lest, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allâh through ignorance. Thus to every people have We made their deeds fair-seeming; then to their

101a. This verse and those that follow describe the transcendental Unity of the Divine Being. To attribute a son to Him is to acknowledge that He had a consort; otherwise the word son will have to be taken simply as a metaphor; see 2:116a.

103a. The physical vision of man, working as it does only within narrow limits and being able only to see bodies, cannot comprehend the Infinite One. He is the all-pervading Spirit, and can be seen only with the spiritual eye. Lord is their return so He will inform them of what they did.^a

109 And they swear their strongest oaths by Allâh that if a sign come to them they would certainly believe in it. Say: Signs are with Allâh. And what should make you know that when they come they believe not?^a

110 And We turn their hearts and their sights, even as they did not believe in it the first time; and We leave them in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.^a

Part 8

SECTION 14: Polytheists' Opposition

111 And even if We send down to them the angels and the dead speak to them and We bring together all things before them, they would not believe unless Allâh please, but most of them are ignorant.^a

108a. Here the Muslims are forbidden to abuse even the idols of other people, though their worship is condemned in the strongest terms. It may be added that the clearing of the Ka'bah of idols when Makkah fell into the hands of the Holy Prophet, does not in any way contradict this verse, for to abolish the worship of idols and to abuse them are not the same.

The deeds which are described as having been made fair-seeming to men are the good deeds which are shown by conscience and reason to be fair, not such

deeds as appear only under some delusion to be fair, while they are not really so; see verse 43 and verse 137.

109a. Many signs of the Prophet's truth had appeared while the Prophet was still at Makkah, but they still went on demanding signs. The demand referred to here seems to relate to a particular sign, the sign of the overthrow of their power. The reply to this demand is that signs are with Allâh. These words clearly mean that the sign which they demanded would be shown and that Allâh had the power to show all kinds of signs. But even then they would not believe. The first sign of the overthrow of the power of the Quraish appeared in the battle of Badr, but they did not believe even then.

110a. The turning of their hearts and sights is Allah's leaving them in their inordinacy, as explained by the verse itself. And even this is due to their-own action in rejecting the truth when it first came to them. When truth is not accepted and an attitude of enmity is assumed towards it, the heart becomes estranged from it, and this growing estrangement is termed the turning away of the heart from it.

112 And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the *shayâtîn* from among men and *jinn*,^a some of them inspiring others with gilded speech to deceive (them). And if you're *Rabb* pleased, they would not do it, so leave them alone with what they forge —

113 And that the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter may incline thereto, and that they may be pleased with it, and that they may earn what they are earning.

114 Shall I then seek a judge other than Allâh, when He it is Who has sent down to you the Book fully explained. And those whom We have given the Book know that it is revealed by your *Rabb* with truth, so be not you of the disputers.

115 And the word of your *Rabb* has been accomplished truly and justly. There is none who can change His words; and He is the Hearer, the Knower.^a

111a. The subject of verse 110 is continued here. There are always some men who assume such an attitude of hostility towards Truth that they turn a deaf ear to every argument, and it is of such leaders of evil that this verse speaks; see next verse.

The coming of the angels stands for the execution of the decree of their punishment. The speaking of the dead refers either to the raising of the spiritually dead to life (see verse 122), or to the evidence of those who had passed away before the Prophet, being given through their writings. And lastly, by the bringing together of all things is meant the bringing together of things relating to their punishment. The meaning is that some of the opponents are so blind that the clearest of signs or proofs would not convince them.

112a. By the men and the jinn here are apparently meant the ordinary men and the leaders, suggesting to each other varnished tales of falsehood. See 128a for a fuller discussion of the word jinn.

115a. The word signifies the prophetic word; see 34a.

6:116 And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allâh's way. They follow naught but conjecture, and they only lie.

117 Surely thy *Rabb* — He knows best who goes astray from His way, and He knows best the guided ones.

118 Eat, then, of that on which Allâh's name has been mentioned, if you are believers in His messages.^a

119 And what reason have you that you should not eat of that on which Allâh's name is mentioned, when He has already made plain to you what He has forbidden to you — excepting that which you are compelled to.^a And surely many lead (people) astray by their low desires through ignorance. Surely thy *Rabb* — He best knows the transgressors.

120 And avoid open sins and secret ones. Surely they who earn sin will be rewarded for what they have earned.^a

118a. The establishment of the doctrine of Divine Unity, which is the object of this chapter, required the abolition of all idolatrous practices, among which was the practice of slaughtering animals in the names of idols. And verses 118–121 deal with this subject, which is introduced by an order to eat only such animals as have, been slaughtered in the name of Allâh. Thus it is allowed to Muslims to slaughter animals for food, but the condition is here laid down that Allâh's name

must be mentioned when the animal is slaughtered. There is no doubt that the taking of a life, even though it be the life of an animal, bespeaks a kind of disregard for life, and it is allowed by Allâh, only because the full physical development of human beings requires the use of the flesh of animals. It is, however, allowed subject to the condition that Allâh's name be mentioned at the time of the slaughter, and this is a reminder to man that this act is made lawful only by Divine permission, for the attainment of a necessary purpose. Thus, if aiming at the abolition of idolatrous practices, the order is based on moral grounds, and as a safeguard against the development of habits of disregard for human life itself, which is a sad aspect of the development of the material civilization of our day.

119a. The reference in these words is to what is said in an earlier revelation, regarding the prohibition of carrion and blood and the flesh of swine and animals slaughtered in the name of others than Allâh; see 16:115. The same subject is again referred to in verse 145 in this chapter, as also in 2:173 and in greater detail in 5:3, both of these being Madînah revelations.

120a. It is a very low view of morals, which considers only sins against society to be hateful. The Muslim is here commanded to consider *open* and *secret* sins to be equally hateful. In fact there are very few people who commit open sins as compared with those who are guilty of secret sins.

121 And eat not of that on which Allâh's name has not been mentioned, and that is surely a transgression. ^a And certainly the *shaitân* inspire their friends to contend with you; and if you obey them, you will surely be polytheists.

SECTION 15: The Chief Opponents

122 Is he who was dead, then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in darkness whence he cannot come forth?^a Thus their doings are made fair seeming to the disbelievers.

123 And thus have We made in every town the leaders of its guilty ones, that they may make plans therein. And they plan not but against themselves, and they perceive not.

124 And when a message comes to them they say, ‘We will not believe till we are given the like of that which Allâh’s messengers are given. Allâh best knows where to place His message.^a Humiliation from Allâh and severe chastisement will surely befall the guilty for their planning.

121a. According to this verse a Muslim is allowed only to eat of the flesh of an animal slaughtered in the name of Allâh. But 5:5 allows to Muslims the *food of the People of the Book*, by which is meant according to the hadîth, an animal slaughtered by the People of the Book. The only condition added is that “if the slaughterer was heard uttering a name other than that of Allâh, the flesh was not to be eaten, but if he was not so heard, then it was lawful for the Muslims to eat it” (Bukhârî 72:22). Therefore the words under discussion are explained by the majority as containing only a prohibition against the eating of that which is slaughtered in the name of others than Allâh. See further 5:5a.

122a. These words throw a flood of light on many of the verses, which speak of the raising of the dead to life through the prophets. The reference here is to the great transformation which was already being brought about through the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. Not only were the dead raised to life, but they had now with them the light by which they showed the way to others. The concluding words show that, notwithstanding the great transformation, which was being worked before their eyes, the leaders of mischief went on opposing the Truth as if it were a good deed.

125 So whomsoever Allâh intends to guide, He expands his breast for Islâm, and whomsoever He intends to leave in error, He makes his breast strait (and) narrow as though he were ascending upwards. Thus does Allâh lay uncleanness on those who believe not.^a

126 And this is the path of thy *Rabb*, (a) straight (path). Indeed We have made the messages clear for a people who mind.

127 Theirs is the abode of peace with their *Rabb*, and He is their Friend because of what they do.

128 And on the day when He will gather them all together: O assembly of *jinn*,^a you took away a great part of human beings. And their friends from among human beings will say, ‘Our *Rabb*, some of us profited by others and we have reached our appointed term, which You did appoint for us. He will say, ‘The Fire is your abode — you shall abide therein, except as Allâh please. Surely your *Rabb* is Wise, Knowing.’^b

124a. If Allâh really meant to reveal His message, the disbelievers said, why was it not revealed directly to every one of them? The answer is that everyone is not fit to communicate with the Divine Being, and Allâh revealed His message only to a man who was fit to receive it.

125a. The concluding words of the verse show that uncleanness of the heart, which makes a human’s *breast strait and narrow*, as though *he were ascending upwards*, is the result of a human’s own disbelief and rejection of the truth.

128a. The Arabic word *jinn*, is derived from *janna*, meaning *he covered* or *concealed* or *hid* or *protected*. The class of beings that goes under this name stands in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân for the evil actions or the beings that invite human beings to evil, as opposed to the *malâ’ikah*, who invite them to good, both being alike invisible to the human eye. But there is a wider use of the word in Arabic literature as well as in the Qur’ân. One signification of the word is explained in 72:1, and I would refer the reader to that footnote. But the word is also applied in the Qur’ân to great potentates or powerful leaders who, through their importance and detachment from the masses, do not mix freely with them, so they remain distant or “hidden from their eyes”. In Arabic literature such a use was permitted. A verse of Mûsâ Ibn Jâbir, in which the word *jinn* occurs, is thus explained by the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane on the authority of Tabrezî on Ham. He states, “*And my companions, who were like the jinn, did not flee when I came to them and informed them*”, where the word *jinn* is translated as meaning *companions who were like the jinn*. And Tabrezî says further that *the Arabs liken a*

man who is sharp and clever in affairs to a *jinnî* and a *shaitân*, and hence they say, *nafarat jinnu-hû* (literally, *his jinn fled away*), meaning *he became weak and abject*. Therefore a man's companion, without whose help he would be weak and abject, was called a *jinnî*.

What is meant by the assembly (*ma'shar*) of *jinn* here and by *jinn* in verse 130? This is made clear if we read this verse with those following. In this verse *jinn* are spoken of as *friends of men*, and verse 129, which continues the subject, speaks of the iniquitous as befriending one another, while in verse 130 human beings and *jinn* are spoken of as a single *ma'shar* or community, for which see 130a.

Again in verse 131, those very *jinn* are spoken of as being no others than dwellers of the cities, which were destroyed on account of their sins, and we know that the *jinn* who dwell in cities are only *men*. The context thus makes it clear that by the *jinn* here are meant the leaders of evil, just as by *shayâtîn* in 2:14 are meant *leaders of human beings*, for which see 2:14a.

129 And thus do We make some of the iniquitous to befriend others on account of what they earn.

SECTION 16: Evils of Idolatry

130 O community of *jinn* (of evil doers) and humans did there not come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My messages and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours?^a They will say: We bear witness against ourselves. And this world's life deceived them, and they will bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers.

128b. The words *except as Allâh please* indicate that those in hell shall after all be delivered from it. For a full discussion on this point, see 11:107a.

130a. *Ma'shar* means *a community whose affair is one and the same* — *jamâ'at-un amru-hum wâhid-un* — thus you say *ma'shar al-Muslimîn*, which means the community of the Muslims (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

Thus by calling the *jinn* and humans as a single community, the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân has made it clear that the *jinn* and the humans spoken of here are not two different classes of beings. Again, the *jinn* and the human beings are told that messengers had come to them *from among them*, i.e. from among *jinn* and humans. But as the only messengers spoken of in the Qur'ân and other reliable histories of prophets are those who belong to mankind, it follows that the *jinn* spoken of here belong to mankind, and not to any other class of creation.

131 This is because your *Rabb* would not destroy towns unjustly while their people are negligent.^a

132 And for all are degrees according to their doings. And thy *Rabb* is not heedless of what they do.

133 And thy *Rabb* is the Self-sufficient One, the *Rabb* of mercy. If He please, He may remove you, and make whom He pleases successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of other people.

134 Surely that which you are promised will come to pass, and you cannot escape (it).^a

135 Say: O my people, act according to your ability, I too am acting; so you will soon come to know for whom is the (good) end of the abode. Surely the wrongdoers will not succeed.

136 And they set apart a portion for Allâh out of what He has created of tilth and cattle, and say: This is for Allâh — so they assert — and this for our associate-gods. Then that which is for their associate-gods reaches not Allâh, and that which is for Allâh reaches their associate gods. Evil is what they judge.^a

131a. That is, while the reminder and the warning had not yet come to them. Or, the words mean that it is not for negligence that nations are destroyed; it is only when they become iniquitous and spread mischief in the world that they are overtaken by punishment in this life.

134a. Mark again the certainty with which the idolatrous Quraish are told — and through them all the proud opponents of Truth — in this verse and the one

preceding, that their authority in their country would cease to exist and another people would be raised in their stead.

137 And thus their associate-gods have made fair-seeming to many polytheists the killing of their children,^a that they may cause them to perish and obscure for them their religion.^b And if Allâh had pleased, they would not have done it, so leave them alone with that which they forge.

138 And they say: Such and such cattle and crops are prohibited — none shall eat them except such as we please ^a — so they assert — and cattle whose backs are forbidden,^b and cattle on which they would not mention Allâh's name ^c — forging a lie against Him. He will requite them for what they forge.

139 And they say: That which is in the wombs of such and such cattle is reserved for our males, and forbidden to our wives, and if it be stillborn, they are partners in it. He will reward them for their (false) attribution. Surely He is Wise, Knowing.

136a. It was a custom among the Arab idolaters to set apart certain portions of the produce of their fields and their cattle, one portion for Allâh and another portion for the idols. The portion for idols was always applied to their use. But the portion set apart for Allâh, though ordinarily spent to feed the poor and the needy, was in certain cases — for instance, when the portion of the idols was somehow or other destroyed — diverted to the use of the idols ('*Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs* (Companion) - and *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). The portion for the idols was handed over to the priests.

137a. This refers to the practice of slaying or burying alive the female children (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî), and also to the human sacrifices to idols, as they sometimes vowed that, if they had a number of sons, they would sacrifice one of them to an idol (*Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharî).

137b. By introducing these superstitious and evil customs they were making confused and obscure the true *the way of life as prescribed by Allâh* — the *Dîn* of the service of One Allâh.

138a. Only devotees of idols and males could eat them, and not females.

138b. Such animals are meant as the *bahîrah*, the *sâ'ibah*, etc. See 742.

138c. That is, such as were sacrificed in the name of idols. All these along with what is said in the next two verses are denounced as being idolatrous practices.

140 They are losers indeed who kill their children foolishly without knowledge, and forbid that which Allâh has provided for them, forging a lie against Allâh. They indeed go astray, and are not guided.

SECTION 17: Idolaters' Self-imposed Prohibitions

141 And He it is Who produces gardens, trellised and un-trellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits^a are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates like and unlike. Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and be not prodigal. Surely He loves not the prodigals;

142 And of the cattle (He has created) some for burden and some for slaughter.^a Eat of that which Allâh has given you and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy —

143 Eight in pairs — of the sheep two and of the goats two. Say, 'Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge, if you are truthful;^a

141a. The word *ukul* here, as well as in 2:265 and 13:35, is equivalent to *thamar* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ*), and means *fruit*.

142a. *Farsh* (from *farasha*, i.e. *he spread it*) means *what is spread*, but here, according to lexicologists as well as commentators, it signifies *animals fit for slaughter*, because they are thrown down for slaughter (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ*, and *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The *hamûlah* (from *haml*, *bearing of burden*) means *beasts of burden*. The *farsh* are not fit for carrying burden, hence the distinction;

but the *hamûlah* serve both purposes. This is shown by the words that follow — *eat of that which Allâh has given you.*

143a. The cattle spoken of in the previous verse are eight in pairs, i.e. counting the male and the female separately, and these are enumerated in verses 143 and 144. The Arabs considered those animals, which were otherwise lawful for them to be unlawful in particular cases. These practices, which were all superstitious, resulting from idol-worship, are here condemned.

144 And of the camels two and of the cows two. Say, ‘Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allâh enjoined you this? Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allâh to lead men astray without knowledge? Surely Allâh guides not the iniquitous people.

SECTION 18: Prohibited Foods

145 Say, ‘I find not in that which is revealed to me ought forbidden for an eater to eat thereof, except that it be what dies of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine — for that surely is unclean — or what is a transgression, other than (the name of) Allâh having been invoked on it. But whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely your *Rabb* is Forgiving, Merciful.^a

146 And to those who are Jews We forbade every animal having claws,^a and of oxen and sheep We forbade them the fat thereof,^b except such as was on their backs or the entrails or what was mixed with bones. This was a punishment We gave them on account of their rebellion, and We are surely Truthful.

145a. For the prohibition made known here reasons are also given. The reason for the prohibition of what dies of itself and blood and swine’s flesh being that these things are *unclean*. While the reason for the prohibition of animals on which other than Allâh’s name is invoked is different, viz., *fisq*, or a transgression of the Divine commandment, which requires all things to be avoided which are in any way associated with idolatry. The uncleanness in the case of the first three consists

in their pernicious effect upon the intellectual, the physical, and the moral systems respectively, while the transgression in the case of the last affects the religious conditions.

146a. According to ‘*Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) it means only *the camel*, or *the camel and the ostrich*. *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî is of opinion that by *zufr* here is meant *talons* and *claws*. According to *Mujâhid ibn Jâbar* (*Tâbi‘î*) and *Qatâdah ibn Du‘âmah* (*Tâbi‘î*) the *dhi-zufr* means *every beast and bird that has not divided toes, as the camel, ostrich, goose, and duck* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ, and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The prohibition of using the camel for food, though a punishment for the rebellion of the Jews as stated further on, was a blessing to them. On account of their disobedience to Moses they had to remain in the wilderness for a long time, where the camel was of great service to them in their journeys from place to place.

147 But if they give thee the lie, then say: Your *Rabb* is the *Rabb* of all-encompassing mercy; and His punishment cannot be averted from the guilty people.^a

148 Those who are polytheists say, ‘If Allâh pleased we would not have set up (ought with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have made anything unlawful. Thus did those before them reject (the truth) until they tasted Our punishment. Say, ‘Have you any knowledge so you would bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture and you only tell lies.

149 Say: Then Allâh’s is the conclusive argument; so if He had pleased, He would have guided you all.^a

150 Say: Bring your witnesses who bear witness that Allâh forbade this. If they bear witness, then do not you bear witness with them. And follow not the low desires of those who reject Our messages and those who believe not in the Hereafter, and they make (others) equal with their *Rabb*.

146b. “You shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat” (Leviticus 7: 23).

147a. The all-encompassing mercy of Allâh is mentioned even in speaking of those who rejected the Holy Prophet. It was because of the mercy of Allâh that the disbelievers were not destroyed immediately; but as punishing the “guilty” is in itself a mercy towards the weak and the oppressed, they are warned that they will not escape punishment if they persist in their evil ways.

149a. The previous verse records the statement of the disbelievers: “If Allâh pleased we would not have set up ought with Him”. The reply is that Allâh reveals His will through His chosen messengers, so bring forth any Divine revelation that you possess sanctioning idolatry. The argument is here carried on further. Allâh does not mislead men, but, on the other hand, sends His prophets to guide them into the right path. His pleasure is therefore that all men should walk in the right path and serve only one Master. Is not that a conclusive argument against the false assertion of the idolaters? The guidance of Allâh is, moreover, brought through prophets, and men are never compelled to accept the right way; much less could they be compelled to follow the wrong course, as the idolaters thought. Human beings was created with a will free within certain limits to act as he pleases.

SECTION 19: Guiding Rules of Life

151 Say: Come! I will recite what your *Rabb* has forbidden to you: Associate naught with Him and do good to parents and slay not your children for (fear of) poverty — We provide for you and for them — and draw not nigh to indecencies, open or secret, and kill not the soul which Allâh has made sacred except in the course of justice. This He enjoins upon you that you may understand.

152 And approach not the property of the orphan except in the best manner,^a until he attains his maturity. And give full measure and weight with equity — We impose not on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability. And when you speak, be just, though it be (against) a relative.^b And fulfil Allâh’s covenant. This He enjoins on you that you may be mindful;

153 And (know) that this is My path, the right one, so follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way. This He enjoins on you that you may keep your duty.

152a. That is, unless you do it with the object of improving it or making it profitable. Wages of the guardian may be paid from it, for which see 4:6 and 543.

152b. Islâm requires a human being to be so upright as not to be led away by the ties of relationship. Truth is not to be sacrificed to any interest but every interest must be sacrificed to truth.

154 Again, We gave the Book to Mûsâ to complete (Our blessings) on him who would do good, and making plain all things^a and a guidance and a mercy, so that they might believe in the meeting with their *Rabb*.

SECTION 20: The Goal for the Faithful

155 And this is a Book We have revealed, full of blessings; so follow it and keep your duty that mercy may be shown to you,^a

156 Lest you should say that the Book was revealed only to two parties before us and we were truly unaware of what they read,^a

157 - Or, lest you should say, ‘If the Book had been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than they. So indeed there has come to you clear proof from your *Rabb*, and guidance and mercy. Who is then more unjust than he who rejects Allâh’s messages and turns away from them? We reward those who turn away from Our messages with an evil chastisement because they turned away.

154a. By *all things* are meant all those things needed for the guidance of the Isrâ’îlites.

155a. It should be noted that as the Qur’ân is mentioned along with the previous revelations, the word *mubâarak* is added as signifying *the continuance forever of the blessings which a thing possesses*. The object is to show that, whereas the blessings of other books came to an end after a time, the Qur’ân shall forever remain a source of blessings to its followers.

156a. Because in Arabia there lived only the Jews and the Christians besides the idolaters, the Arabs spoke of only two parties to whom the Book was given.

158 They wait not ought but that the *malâ'ikah* should come to them, or that your *Rabb* should come,^a or that some of the signs of your *Rabb* should come.^b On the day when some of the signs of your *Rabb* come, its faith will not profit a *nafs* (person) which believed not before, nor earned good through its faith. Say, 'Wait; we too are waiting.

159 As for those who split up their religion and became sects, thou hast no concern with them. Their affair is only with Allâh,^a then He will inform them of what they did.

160 Whoever brings a good deed will have tenfold like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, will be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be wronged.^a

158a. For a similar expression see 2:210, 268. Also see 812. Similar words occur also in 16:33: "Await they ought but that the *malâ'ikah* should come to them or that your *Rabb's* command should come to pass". Here the words are *that your Rabb should come*. Thus the coming of your *Rabb* carries the same significance as the coming to pass of His commandment, or the execution of His decree, i.e. the final doom of the opponents. The coming of the *malâ'ikah* stands for the smaller visitations or distresses the opponents witnessed in the battles which they fought to annihilate Islâm, in which the coming of *malâ'ikah* is clearly spoken of; see 3:125, 126; 8:9.

158b. The execution of punishment having already been spoken of, that is, in the coming of *malâ'ikah* and the coming of thy *Rabb*. What is meant is that by the coming of "some of the signs of thy *Rabb*"? According to a hadîth there is a reference here to the signs, which would proceed the day of Resurrection, such as the appearance of Anti-Christ and the advent of the Messiah and other connected signs. But there is one difficulty in accepting this to be the interpretation of these words. The coming of the Messiah is according to all authorities a sign of a general religious awakening to be brought about in the world. In other words is the prevalence of Islâm, but here we are told that when some of the signs come, faith would not benefit a human being. The only time when faith does not benefit a

human is the approach of death, and hence I am of opinion that by “some of the signs of thy *Rabb*” are meant clear signs of approach of death. A human’s death is in one sense also his resurrection: “Whoever dies, his resurrection comes to pass” (*Mishkât al-Maṣâbîḥ* (Hadîth), by Shaikh Walî al-Dîn Muḥammad ‘Abd Allâh 26:6).

159a. This refers primarily to the Jews and the Christians, but includes sectarians of all religions who split up the unity of their religion and become divided into sects, each sect dissipating its energy in wrangling with others, instead of advancing the common cause.

160a. No other sacred book gives such prominence to the preponderance of the quality of mercy in the Divine Being. While evil must have its evil consequence, it is only its like, but virtue brings a tenfold reward. According to a saying of the Holy Prophet, evil is pardoned or recompensed with its like, while good brings from a tenfold to a seven-hundredfold reward (*Bukhârî* 81:33). Thus the verse mentions only the maximum punishment of evil and the minimum reward of good.

161 Say: As for me, my *Rabb* has guided me to the right path — a right *dîn* (way of life as prescribed by Allâh), the *millah* (the way of Allâh as ordered) of Ibrâhîm, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists.

162 Say: My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are surely for Allâh, the *Rabb* of the worlds^a—

163 No associate has He. And this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.

164 Say: Shall I seek a *Rabb* other than Allâh, while He is the *Rabb* of all things? And no *nafs* earns (evil) but against itself. Nor does a bearer of burden bear another’s burden.^a Then to your *Rabb* is your return, so He will inform you of that in, which you differed.

162a. The idea of entire submission to the Divine Being conveyed in the word *Islâm*, finds its perfect manifestation in the Holy Prophet, who is the first of the Muslims (verse 163). There are different motives, love of one’s self, of one’s wife and children, of one’s friends and relatives, of one’s country or nation, which

prompt a man to action. And there is no doubt that the grander, the purer, and the more selfless the object, the nobler is the deed done; but above even the noblest object that a man can set for himself stands the love of the Divine Being. The deed done may be for the welfare of one's self, or of those dearest to one, or of one's country or nation. But the mainspring of that action must be the love of the Divine Being, for then only is it that perfect disinterestedness combined with absolute justice to all creatures can be achieved. It is the highest goal of human life, and every Muslim is taught to set that goal before him self. He is taught to pray in the words of this verse when he begins his daily prayers. The only difference being that the concluding words of this prayer are *wa ana min al-Muslimîn*, i.e., I am *one of those* who submit, while verse 163, giving a description of the Prophet, ends with the words, I am the *first of those* who submit.

164a. "Nor does a bearer of burden bear another's burden" are the words in which the Christian doctrine of atonement is rejected by the Glorious Qur'ân. Elsewhere we have: "That no bearer of burden bears another's burden and that man can have nothing but what he strives for" (53:38, 39). Every human being that is born is called *a bearer of burden*, not because he is a sinner, but because he starts life with certain responsibilities of his own. It is groundless to assert that "Jesus Christ" entered into life without any responsibilities of his own. The study of his life shows him as feeling his own responsibilities and as caring for them.

165 And He it is Who has made you successors in the land ^a and exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by what He has given you. Surely thy *Rabb* is Quick in requiting (evil), and He is surely the Forgiving, the Merciful.

165a. With the highest goal of life before them, the Muslims are now told that they were going to be made rulers in the land. Their exaltation above others, however, was not due to their wealth or to their great political power but simply to the fact that they submitted themselves to Allâh. And that their prayers and their sacrifices were not for their nation or their country but for Allâh, Who was the *Rabb*, the Nourisher unto perfection, of the whole of humanity. Hence they were a

people who had the betterment of the whole of humanity in view. But even they are told, in the concluding words of the verse, that if they fall off and follow evil ways they will be requited, though the forgiveness and mercy of the Divine Being will ultimately take them by the hand.